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INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 003735

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/13/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [ECON](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: SAMARRA RECONSTRUCTION: CONSTRUCTION ON GOLDEN
MOSQUE TO BEGIN IN DECEMBER

REF: BAGHDAD 3590

Classified By: Deputy Political Counselor Ellen Germain
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) This is a joint POL/Salah ad Din PRT reporting cable.

Summary

¶2. (C) Senior Advisor to the Prime Minister on Reconstruction Issues Haq al-Hakim told Poloff and MNF-I representatives during a November 7 meeting he will soon sign a contract with the Turkish contractor to begin reconstruction on the Shia Golden Mosque in Samarra in early December. Al-Hakim said the GOI has reached an agreement with Samarra tribal representatives to establish two tribal councils that will coordinate with the GOI on security and reconstruction issues. PM Maliki, reversing an earlier decision, has authorized 40 Turkish security personnel to provide security for the contractor's work force and materials. Al-Hakim said he convinced reconstruction stakeholders that UNESCO should lead reconstruction efforts in Samarra with GOI input and authorization. Al-Hakim is reluctant to involve provincial government officials, whom he claims lack the confidence of Samarra residents to help rebuild and revitalize the city. Al-Hakim repeated an earlier request for assistance from USM-I for additional assistance and resources for reconstruction in Samarra. End Summary.

Update on Shrine Reconstruction

¶3. (C) On November 7, Poloff and MNF-I representatives met with Supreme Construction Council Advisor to the Prime Minister Haq al-Hakim for an update on reconstruction efforts in Samarra in the north-central province of Salah ad Din. Al-Hakim said PM Maliki has authorized him to sign a contract with the Turkish contractor to begin reconstruction of the Shia mosque. Al Hakim said the contractor has promised construction will begin in early December.

GOI Will Work Through Tribal Councils

¶4. (C) Al-Hakim said he recently met with representatives from the largest Samarra tribes and reached an agreement to establish two tribal councils to address reconstruction issues. Al-Hakim said tribal leaders pledged their support for reconstruction efforts and made clear their intent to fight Al Qaeda (AQI). Al-Hakim said the agreement has been sent to PM Maliki for his final approval. The first council, which has already been established, is made up of members representing 11 of Samara's 27 tribes. Al Hakim said the second smaller council had not yet been established but will consist of five to six tribal representatives. Major General

Rasheed, the GOI point of contact for security issues in Samarra, will be a member of this council. The two councils, in coordination with the GOI, will facilitate reconstruction efforts in Samarra.

Security Arrangements Beginning to Take Shape

15. (C) Reversing an earlier decision, PM Maliki has authorized the Turkish contractor to hire 40 Turkish security forces to protect mosque materials and workers. According to al-Hakim, the GOI also has pledged to provide Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) for mosque security. Additionally, tribal leaders have reached an agreement with the GOI to provide security personnel to assist the 300-member Iraqi Police force in Samarra. Each tribe will be responsible for vetting their own security personnel, many of whom they hope will be later hired by IP, which plans to staff up to 1200 police officers. Al-Hakim said there are concerns about AQI in Samarra, but that in discussions with tribal representatives, they feel with the proper training and equipment will be able to remove AQI forces from Samarra City in three months.

UNESCO Will Have Lead

16. (C) Poloff inquired if UNESCO's role had been clarified in Samarra's reconstruction efforts. Al-Hakim said he had initially encountered resistance but was able to convince tribal leaders, religious authorities, and other GOI officials that UNESCO should take the lead on reconstruction projects. He said UNESCO would be closely involved in planning, but the GOI would have the final authorization.

Still No Role for Provincial Government

17. (C) Poloff and MNF-I representative raised concerns about the GOI's exclusion of the provincial government in Samarra's reconstruction efforts. Al-Hakim reiterated that he is following the wishes of Samarra residents who lack confidence in the provincial council and governor. Al-Hakim believes the tribal councils will be more effective leveraging assistance from the provincial government than including a provincial government representative on the tribal councils. He acknowledged that there likely will be problems that arise, but is convinced that if the tribal council model works, it will encourage wider participation by other tribes. He reasoned, "It is important to unify the tribes first, then move forward."

Comment

18. (C) The GOI appears to be making progress to begin reconstruction of the Shia al-Askari Mosque. However, it is unclear how the Mosque can be rebuilt without provincial government involvement. Support for contractors and security personnel will need to be tied into the deficient local grids, which will require engagement by local director generals (DG). However, this is unlikely since DGs may dislike supporting projects that are geared solely towards Mosque reconstruction, without benefit to the entire district. This point was reiterated at a recent PRT-sponsored meeting of provincial officials and ISF commander Rasheed. Regarding security, al-Hakim may be bypassing the provincial government because it has failed to supply all 1,200 police officers allocated to Samarra. With the availability of only 300 police officers in Samarra, much of the burden of guarding the Mosque will fall to the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), which has its hands full with clashes between rival Sunni groups including AQI. This may give provincial government officials yet another reason to refuse support for capital projects. End Comment.
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